

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for controlling the operation of a home appliance, comprising:
 - a keypad including a plurality of keys;
 - 5 a memory for storing a command code library for use in commanding the operation of the home appliance wherein at least one command code from the command code library is associated with at least one key of the keypad;
 - a transmitter in communication with the keypad wherein activation of the at least one key of the keypad causes the transmitter to transmit the at least one command code to
 - 10 the home appliance; and
 - a relay unit spaced from the keypad comprising a button corresponding to the at least one key of the keypad wherein activation of the button functions to simulate activation of the at least one key of the keypad to thereby cause the transmitter to transmit to the home appliance the at least one command code from the command code library that
 - 15 is mapped to the at least one key of the keypad.
2. The system as recited in claim 1, wherein the keypad, memory, and transmitter are within a remote control housing.
- 20 3. The system as recited in claim 1, wherein the transmitter utilizes IR signals to communicate with the home appliance.

4. The system as recited in claim 1, wherein the button corresponds to a user-definable macro key of the keypad to which multiple command codes from the command code library are mapped.

5 5. The system as recited in claim 1, wherein the relay unit is adapted to be attached to a key chain.

6. The system as recited in claim 1, wherein the relay unit is adapted to be mounted to a wall.

10 7. The system as recited in claim 1, wherein the relay unit is built into an alarm clock.

8. The system as recited in claim 1, wherein the relay unit is built into a phone handset.

15 9. The system as recited in claim 1, wherein the relay unit is built into a piece of furniture.

20 10. In a system, a method for controlling one or more home appliances, comprising:
accepting input by which at least one command code from a plurality of command codes stored in a memory are associated with at least one key on a keypad;

determining if the at least one key has been activated;

determining if a command signal transmission that identifies the at least one key has been received from a relay unit spaced from the keypad; and

when it is determined that either the at least one key has been activated or the

5 command signal transmission that identifies the at least one key has been received,

communicating to the one or more of the home appliances the one or more command codes that have been associated to the at least one key on the keypad.

11. The method as recited in claim 11, comprising transmitting the one or more

10 command codes using an infrared transmission protocol.